

IFEKU ISLAND
BENIN PROVINCE

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Intelligence Report on the Northern Villages
of Ifeku Island, Kukuruku Division.
by Mr. H.C.B. Denton District Officer.
Report on the Northern Ifekus.

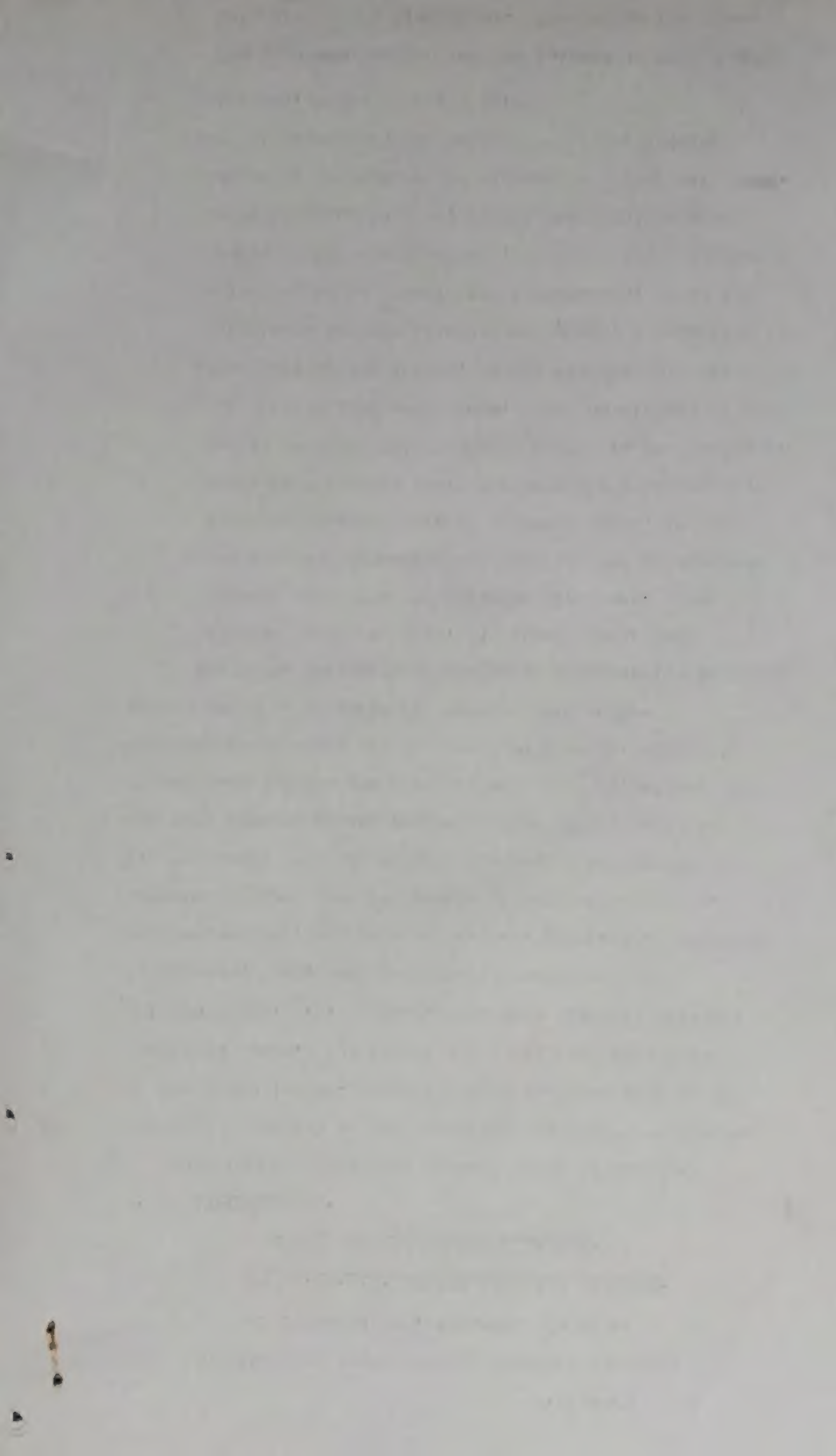
1. Introduction.

This report deals with a small group of people, numbering some 640 in all occupying the northern portion of the Ifeku island, separated from the main land by the Alagbetta Creek. The report should be read with that written by Mr. A.V. Scallon, Assistant District Officer, in October, 1936, and described as "Ifeku is;and-Reorganisation", and that of Mr. D.P. Stanfield, Assistant District Officer upon the Inemes of Kukuruku Division.

2. The small unit of the northern Ifekus has formed for some time an administrative problem in regard to its disposition between the Kukuruku and Ishan Divisions. The difficulties are set out in paragraph 3 of Mr. Scallon's report which is repeated for case of reference:-

In 1923, following a meeting of the District Officers Ubiaja, Auchi and Idah, the island was divided between the Ishan and Kukuruku Divisions. When Intelligence inquiries were started and it appeared that the islanders are of a common stock, it was considered that in their own economic interests the people would benefit by being united in one Division. But difficulties soon arose. The inhabitants of the Ishan part of the island, though divided in their allegiance between Illushi and Ugboha, were united in objecting to be transferred to Kukuruku; while the Ifekus in the Kukuruku part, though willing to join their brethren in Isha, feared the complications caused by the numbers of Alagbettas living with them. In this connexion the District Officer, Kukuruku Division, wrote in May 1936:-

"The Kukuruku portion (of the island) is occupied by both Ifekus and Alagbettas. The latter are free-



freeholder and have never recognised the superior landlordship of Ifeku. Indeed, under the District Headship of the late Oriola (of Alagbetta) they came to regard the Ifekus as strangers living on Alagbetta land. From an examination of land and fishing-pond cases arising in the area I have formed the opinion that the Kukuruku portion of the island must be considered land communal to both villages, (i.e. Alagbetta and Ifeku). This fact was apparently considered by those administrative officers who fixed a Divisional boundary to divide a people of common stock".

3. The writer of this report has for some time discussed proposals for reorganisation with the Ifekus, and at Alagbetta in February, 1938, a measure of compromise was reached. It cannot be said that the proposals which follow have the whole-hearted approval of the people, but it can at least be recorded that they are prepared to test them in practice and, if necessary, ask for their operation.

II Geographical.

4. The northern Ifekus approximately three eighths of the island which has a total area of about 32 square miles. The density of population is therefore some 53 to the square mile

5. III. Historical

The first Ifekus came from Idah (Igala Division, Kabba Province), some 150 years ago, and under the leadership of one OLE founded a fishing settlement. With Ole came Ajogwu, Aduku and Okeyi.

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6. Ole held the title of Okaku conferred on him by the Atta of Idah and was the recognised leader of the settlers. On his death Uja, a son of Ajogwu, assumed the title and leadership. From the core at the nother of the island other settlements arose until the whole of the island became sparsely covered with the hamlets of fisher-folk of Igarra origin.

7. In 1919 the question of the administration of the island arose. The possibilities were for it to be administered from Ubiaja, Idah or Fugar (then the headquarters of the Kukuruku Division). It was decided that the island should be divided by a "well-known" boundary between its southern and northern portions the former to be administered from Ubiaja the latter from Fugar. It is of interest to record that during the discussion the Ekperi clan, through its head, claimed that the Ifekus were of Ekperi origin.

8. Northern Ifeku has, since the partition of 1919, been administered as part of the Kukuruku Division. From 1918-1921 it was within the jurisdiction of the Fugar Native Court and from 1921 to 1924 the Agenebode Native Court. In 1925 a sessional court at Alagbetta was opened in which the north Ifeku were represented by Isitor, elected to the position by the people.

9. In 1919 the Oriola of Alagbetta was appointed District Head of the Ineme District and from that date the fishing pools lying between Alagbetta and northern Ifeku have formed the subject of innumerable disputes. This fact has some bearing upon the proposals which will follow.

10. In 1936 the Agenebode Native Court was reorganised, its jurisdiction being limited to the area occupied by the Weppa-Wanno Clan. A report has been

submitted

submitted for the reorganisation of the Inemes of Alagbetta and the position of the northern Ifekus now demands attention.

IV and V. Administrative and Judicial.

11. In view of the volume of intelligence which has been collected upon the Inemes and Ifekus it is proposed to deal with the administrative and judicial elements of the northern Ifekus under one head.

12. The northern Ifeku group settlement (it is difficult to find an English term to describe the unit, for it is neither a clan nor a village), if for administrative purposes divided into 5 units details of which are now given:-

<u>Unit.</u>	<u>Adult Males</u>	<u>Tax rate 1937/38</u>
ABACHA	29	5/9d
ABAJEGBA	20	5/9d
AGOKO	15	5/9d
TAKWUSA	8	5/9d
STRANGERS	8	5/9d
	<u>80</u>	

13. In addition to these there are many farmer from Alagbetta spread throughout the northern part of the island. Administratively they do not combine with the ifekus, for they join with their parent units on the mainland.

14. The headship of the northern Ifekus is vested in the holder of Okaku title. This is taken, in rotation, by the oldest man from Abacha and Abajegba, who in virtue of his title becomes the priest of the land juju. Second in position to the Okaku is the Okpala, successor designate to the Okaku. The title rotates between Abacha

and

and Abajejo. Thus if the Osoke title is held in Abacha, the Okoria is held in Abajejo. The Osoke and the Ojipala are assisted in their control of the group's affairs by the oldest man from Takwusa, (holding the courtesy title of Ataji), and the Ata Osoke and Ata Egbite from Ayoko. Ayoko is divided in 2 units, Ofire and Agwa. The oldest man from the former is known as the Ata Osoke and from the latter Ata Egbite.

15. These 5 men are generally assisted by their contemporaries.

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